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Birmingham firemen remove body of one of four girls killed Sept. 15, 1963, when a church was bombed from passing car.

Ala. Reopens '63 Fatal Bombing Case

By Andrew Kilpatrick
Special to The Washington Post

BIRMINGHAM, Ala., Feb. 18—Alabama Attorney General Bill Baxley said today that he has reopened an investigation into the September, 1963, bombing that killed four black girls and injured 19 other persons at a Birmingham church.

Baxley would not confirm or deny published reports that he had been given the names of nine suspects by an informer. He refused to comment on the possibility of arrests.

The bomb, hurled from a passing car into the crowded 16th Street Baptist Church, exploded just as Sunday school classes were ending and triggered outbreaks of racial violence that resulted in the deaths of two more persons.



BILL BAXLEY
... Ala. attorney general

No one has been arrested in the case.

Baxley said he has been

working on the investigation for more than a year and has received files from the FBI and Birmingham police. He also confirmed that, among other witnesses, he has talked with former FBI informant Gary Thomas Rowe Jr.

Rowe, who currently lives in Southern California under another name, was an informer on the Ku Klux Klan for the FBI in the early 1960s. His association with the FBI ended after he emerged as the major prosecution witness at the trial of three Klansmen charged in the slaying of Viola Liuzzo, a civil rights worker from Detroit who was shot to death in Lowndes County during the 1965 Freedom March from Selma to Montgomery.

Baxley said the accelerated

his investigation after he received some information from Rowe and an unnamed man recently released from prison. He would not reveal what that information was.

The Sunday school bombing killed Denise McNair, 11, Cynthia Wesley, Carol Robertson, and Addie Mae Collins, all 14.

That day, President Kennedy sent Burke Marshall, his top civil rights troubleshooter, and more than two dozen FBI agents and bomb experts into the city.

After the bombing thousands of blacks poured into the area around the church and fought with police for two hours, often firing rifles into the air, before the crowd was brought under control.

City police fatally shot a 16-year-old black after he fled down an alley when they saw him stoning cars driven by whites. The second victim was a 13-year-old black shot while bicycling in a suburban area of the city.

Later police broke up a rally of white students protesting the desegregation of three Birmingham schools